

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3293

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 0429

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, IN

SUBJECT: UNIVERSITY ATMOSPHERE SINCE THE EMERGENCY

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH EMERGENCY HAS BROUGHT MORE ORDERLY AND BUSINESS-LIKE ATMOSPHERE TO UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES, IT HAS HAD INHIBITING EFFECT ON IN- AND OUT-OF-CLASSROOM DISCUSSION, AND EXTENSION OF EMERGENCY WITH ACCOMPANYING RESTRICTIONS HAS ENHANCED UNHAPPINESS AND DISAPPOINTMENT. NONETHELESS, THERE IS NO SIGN THAT UNIVERSITIES WILL BECOME SITES OF ANY SIGNIFICANT CRITISM OR OPPOSITION. USIS PROGRAMMING AND CONTACTS HAVE BEEN SURPRISINGLY LITTLE EFFECTED THUS FAR, ALTHOUGH INDIAN CONVERSATIONS WITH AMERICAN OFFICERS ABOUT POLITICS ARE MORE RESTRAINED. END SUMMARY.

1. THERE ARE 100 UNIVERSITIES IN INDIA, AND WE DO NOT MAKE REGULAR VISITS TO OR HAVE SUSTAINED CLOSE CONTACT WITH MORE THAN ABOUT 25, SO THAT COMMENT ON THIS SUBJECT--SOLICITED FROM THE THREE CONSULAR DISTRICTS AS WELL AS NORTH INDIA--DRASW ON SECOND-HAND REPORTS AND IMPRESSIONS AS WELL AS ON PERSONAL OBSERVATION AND SPECIFIC FACTS. IT ALSO RELIES ON INFORMATION COMING THROUGH OUR SENIOR LOCAL EMPLOYEES, WHO CAN OFTEN MOVE ABOUT AND TALK MORE FREELY THAN AN AMERICAN OFFICER. ALTHOUGH MANY OF OUR
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CONCLUSIONS NECESSARILY ARE SUBJECTIVE, THERE ARE SOME TO BE

DRAWN AS THE EMERGENCY MOVES INTO "PHASE TWO."

2. VICE-CHANCELLORS, REGISTRARS, AND MANY FACULTY MEMBERS OPENLY APPLAUD THE CAMPUS "LAW AND ORDER" SITUATION THAT THE EMERGENCY HAS PRODUCED. THERE ARE NO STRIKES, OFFICERS ARE NOT BEING GHERAOED, FACULTIES MODERATE THEIR DEMANDS AND ARE REGULAR IN CLASSROOM AND OFFICE APPEARANCE, AND STUDENTS GENERALLY SEEM MORE SERIOUS ABOUT THEIR ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES. IN MANY PLACES STUDENT UNION ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN POSTPONED, AND NATIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE SUSPENDED THEIR EFFORTS (AND AGITATION) ON CAMPUS. THUS, EVEN THOSE WHO LAMENT OTHER ASPECTS OF THE EMERGENCY GAVE SOME POSITIVE THINGS TO SAY ABOUT ITS EFFECTS ON THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS.

3. THIS IS NOT A UNANIMOUS VIEW. THERE HAVE BEEN A FEW INSTANCES OF LEAFLETING AND SURREPTITIOUS POSTING OF PLACARDS DENOUNCING THE PRIME MINISTER AND PROTESTING THE EMERGENCY, AND WE HAVE HEARD OF A FEW ATTEMPTS AT DEMONSTRATIONS THAT WERE QUICKLY BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. IN THE EARLY WEEKS OF THE EMERGENCY THERE WERE A NUMBER OF FACULTY AND STUDENT ARRESTS IN THE TWO DELHI UNIVERSITIES, BUT APPARENTLY VERY FEW ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE COUNTRY. THERE HAVE BEEN NO RECENT REPORTS OF ANY SUCH HAPPENINGS, ALTHOUGH WE ARE TOLD THAT MAHARASHTRA SUTDENTS ARE INVOLVED IN A SATYAGRAHA MOVEMENT, A THAT IN PATNA THERE WERE OFF-CAMPUS CLASHES BETWEEN CONGRESS AND CPI YOUTH GROUPS, THAT IN CALCUTTA SOME STUDENT OPPOSITION HAS BEEN VOICED TO CHANGES THERE IN THE YOUTH CONGRESS LEADERSHIP, AND THAT HYDERABAD STUDENTS SCATTERED PAMPHLETS AND DEMONSTRATED RECENTLY AGAINST THE EMERGENCY. THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT POLICE AGENTS AND OTHER INFORMERS ARE IN PLACE IN ALL UNIVERSITIES, AND THAT SURVEILLANCE AND REPORTING OF ANY POLITICAL ACTIVITY OR COMMENT ARE COMMONPLACE.

4. THIS SITUATION HAS CERTAINLY RESTRICTED FREE SPEECH ON THE CAMPUS ABOUT SPECIFIC CURRENT INDIAN CONDITIONS AND POLICIES, AND IT IMPOSES A MORE-OR-LESS SUBTLE INHIBITION ON THE CONTENT OF LECTURES AND EXPRESSION OF OPINION IN THE CLASSROOM. MADRAS THINKS UNIVERSITIES IN ITS AREA HAVE BEEN LEAST AFFECTED, AND WE GET VARYING PRIVATE COMMENT FROM OUR FACULTY CONTACTS ABOUT THEIR OWN BEHAVIOR. SOME INSIST THAT THE EMERGENCY HAS MADE NO DIFFERENCE TO THE WAY IN WHICH THEY CONDUCT THEIR CLASSES, WHILE OTHERS--
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ESPECIALLY AND NATURALLY IN CERTAIN SOCIAL SCIENCES--HAVE SAID THAT THEY FEEL LESS ABLE TO EXPRESS PERSONAL PREFERENCES AND JUDGMENTS AND ARE LESS WILLING TO DISCUSS CONTEMPORARY EVENTS WITH THEIR STUDENTS. THE STUDENT ATTITUDE AND APPROACH IS SAID TO BE EQUALLY VARIED, RANGING FROM THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE EMERGENCY TO THOSE WHO MAINTAIN A NEUTRAL STANCE TO THOSE WHO OBVIOUSLY DISAPPROVE BUT WITH CAUTIOUS COMMENT AT BEST. SOME STUDENT BODIES ARE DESCRIBED AS "SULLEN," AND MANY STUDENTS APPARENTLY HAVE

TURNED APOLITICAL FROM A SENSE OF INEFFECTIVENESS.

5. WITH ONE OR TWO RECENT AND MINOR EXCEPTIONS, WE HAVE DETECTED NO UNWILLINGNESS TO TAKE PART IN USIS-SPONSORED EVENTS, TO CO-SPONSOR OR TO ATTEND USIS PROGRAMS, AND TO RECEIVE BOTH AMERICAN AND INDIAN EMPLOYEES OF USIS ON CAMPUSES AND IN FACULTY OFFICES. IN FACT, ON TWO OR THREE PROJECTS, THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION HAS BEEN MORE INTERESTED AND FORTHCOMING WITH SUGGESTIONS THAN HAS BEEN TH CASE FOR SEVERAL YEAS. ON THE OTHER HAND, EXCEPT WITH RATHER GOOD FRIENDS AND FACULTY CONTACTS, WE HAVE LESS STRAIGHTFORWARD TALK ABOUT CURRENT EVENTS THAN BEFORE LAST JUNE; AND THE TALK IS ON A ONE-TO-ONE BASIS OR IN VERY SMALL GROUPS IN HOMES OR OTHER PRIVATE PLACES. WE HAVE AN IMPRESSION THAT NON-OFFICIAL AMERICANS FINDIT EASIER TO DRAW OUT INDIAN FRIENDS ABOUT POLITICS THAN DO USIS OFFIERS. OUR INDIAN EMPLOYEES, OF COURSE, HAVE THEIR OWN CONTACTS WITH WHOM THEY CAN TALK QUITE FRANKLY.

6. DESPITE THE SURFACE CALM AND APPARENT GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF THINGS AS THEY ARE, THERE IS ON MANY CAMPUSES AN UNDERLYING UNHAPPINESS AND DISAPPOINTMENT; ALMOST CERTAINLY INTENSIFIED THIS PAST WEEK AS IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE EMERGENCY WOULD BE EXTENDED ALONG WITH THE LIFE OF THE PRESENT PARLIAMENT, PRESS CENSORSHIP, IMPRISONMENT OF OPPOSITION LEADERS, ETC. GIVEN THEIR BACKGROUNDS AND THE NATURE OF THEIR EDUCATION, THE LARGEST NUMBER OF INDIAN EDUCATORS ARE ACCUSTOMED TO THE PARLIAMENARY FORM OF GOVERNMENT, A FREE PRESS, AND A VERY FREE-WHEELING STYLE OF POLITICAL TALK AND ACTIVITY. EVEN THOSE WHO SUPPORT THE CONGRESS AND THE PRIME MINISTER, OR WHO HAVE LITTLE REGARD OR RESPECT FOR THE OPPOSITION, DO NOT LIKE MANY FEATURES OF THE EMERGENCY AND THE FACT OF ITS APPARENT INDEFINITE EXTENSION. HOWEVER, THERE ARE FEW SIGNS THAT ANY INDIVIDUALS ARE WILLING TO RISK THE POSSIBLE PRICE OF PUBLIC CRITICISM, NO ONE IS OFFERING THE GOVERNMENT ANY OVERT CHALLENGE FROM A CAMPUS BASE, AND THERE ARE NO APPARENT CONFIDENTIAL

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ORGANIZATIONAL OR RECRUITING EFFORTS IN THAT DIRECTION. SO FAR AS INDIAN UNIVERSITIES ARE CONCERNED IT IS AN EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY, AND ANY SERIOUS THREATS TO IT ARE MOST UNLIKELY TO ORGINATE WITHIN THOSE UNIVERSITIES; ALTHOUGH SOME FACULTY AND STUDENTS WOULD GO OUT TO JOIN AN OPPOSITION MOVEMENT IF ONE REALLY EMERGED. SAXBE

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